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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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Subject: "JOBS FOR THE DAY AFTER CANNING." Information from the canning specialists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Every homemaker who cans the products of her Victory garden would like to stop short and call it a day when the last jar is out of the water-bath or pressure canner. But the kitchen has to be cleaned up. At the end of any day's canning, of course you have to wash up all the tools, bowls, sieves, pans, towels and other small equipment you used in the work. Then you have to wash your canner thoroughly, wipe it dry, and leave it ready for the next job of canning. That may be the next day or another week.

If you used your steam pressure canner, wash the bottom part only. Never put the lid into water. Wipe it off and make sure that the pet cock, safety valve, and the edges of the lid and canner are perfectly clean. If the openings of the pet cock and safety valve are not absolutely clear, use a toothpick or small pointed tool to clean them. Or pull a string or thin strip of cloth through the opening, the canning specialists suggest.

It pays to leave the kitchen or the canning shed in tip-top order, not only to make the work go faster another time, but to make sure that cleanliness is the rule where canning is going on. If you didn't have your helpers dispose of fruit peelings and vegetable refuse as you went along, get rid of them at the end of the day, or you will soon have flies, fruit flies, and other insect pests around.

When your jars of canned food have cooled overnight here are the jobs to do next day.

Take off any screw bands that have a glass or metal lid underneath. You can use these bands over again to help seal other jars. If a band sticks, don't force it. Cover it with a hot, damp cloth for a minute or two, to loosen it. That nearly always works. If it doesn't, leave the band on. Forcing it might break the seal.

Next test all the jars for leaks. You can test the glass top and mason type jars by turning them partly over in your hands to see if there are any leaks or signs of bubbling at the edges. But don't use this test for jars that seal with a band or cap screwed down over a flat metal lid. Test a flat metal lid by tapping the center with the tip of a teaspoon. If it has sealed right, the teaspoon makes a clear ringing sound. A dull, flat note means a poor seal. What must you do in that case?

In general, a poor seal gives you one of two choices: You can use the food up right away, and use the jar over again for canning some other food. Or can the food again. Empty the jars that didn't seal, wash them and bring them to a boil in the usual way, heat the food, pack it loosely, and process just as if the food were fresh. If the trouble was in the lid, use a new one.

When you have tested all the jars, wipe off those that are soundly sealed, and label each jar so you'll know the contents and the date when you canned the food. If you canned more than one lot in a day, add a lot number. For example, you might put on the label, "Green snap beans, lot #2, July 1, 1944." Then if you find later that a jar has spoiled, you can tell which jars were in that lot.

Destroy the spoiled beans. Set the whole lot of jars aside to test and use up quickly. Test the beans in the other jars of that lot by boiling for at least 10 minutes before anybody tastes them. If the food looks or smells queer, destroy it without tasting. Then you'll be on the safe side.

Store your jars of canned food where it's cool, dark, and dry. If you put them in too warm a place, the warmth may make bacteria in the jars grow and multiply and spoil the food. For example, hot pipes behind a wall sometimes make a shelf or closet a hot spot. Therefore it would be a poor place to store your supply of canned foods.

Freezing in itself does not spoil canned food. But freezing may crack a glass jar or break a seal and let bacteria in. In an unheated storage place you can protect canned food to some extent when cold weather comes if you cover the jars with an old carpet or a blanket, or wrap each jar in several thicknesses of newspapers.

Dampness is hard on metal caps. It causes some types of caps to rust. And light fades canned foods, so they look less attractive. The foods lose vitamins, too, when you expose the jars to light. For a simple "blackout", wrap each jar in dark paper, or newspaper.

And here's one last tip on your "day-after" jobs: If you find any jars of canned foods in your pantry left over from last year, when you are ready to store this year's products, note carefully what fruits or vegetables they are, and put them to one side so you can use them up as soon as possible. Don't can quite so many of those kinds of food again. Maybe the family liked these foods the least of any you canned. Of course you want to save some of every good food you grow, but every family has its favorites, and you might as well can plenty of them.

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